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Implementation Guidelines for Authorizing Payment of Travel Expenses for Candidates' Pre-Employment Interviews and Travel and Transportation Expenses for New Appointees

1. Overview

These guidelines set forth USAID's policies, criteria, responsibilities, and procedures for the payment of travel expenses for candidates invited for pre-employment interviews and new appointees' travel and relocation costs to their first official duty station.

2. Responsibilities

- a. The immediate supervisor in working with the Office of Human Resources (M/HR/POD or EM) or the Personnel Services Division (IG/M/PS) to fill a vacancy is normally the recommending official who is responsible for initiating a request for payment of a candidate's pre-employment interview travel expenses or new appointees' travel and relocation costs.
- b. The Administrative Management Staff (AMS) is responsible for forwarding requests for payment of travel expenses to the Office of Human Resources (M/HR) or Inspector General (IG) for approval and keeping the recommending supervisor apprised of the status of the request.
- c. The Office of Human Resources (M/HR) is responsible for authorizing payment of candidates' pre-employment interview travel expenses or new appointees' travel and relocation costs and periodically reviewing and evaluating use of these authorities. For positions at the GS-15 level and below, the Chief, Personnel Operations Division (M/HR/POD) is the approving authority. For Administratively Determined (AD), Senior Executive Service (SES), Schedule C or Executive Schedule (EX) positions, the Chief, Executive Management Staff (M/HR/EM), is the approving authority.
- d. The Chief Financial Officer (M/CFO) is responsible for approving requests for waiver of repayment of travel and transportation expenses.
- e. The Inspector General (IG) or designee is responsible for authorizing payment of OIG candidates' pre-employment interview travel expenses and travel and relocation costs for new OIG appointees and for approving requests for waiver of repayment of travel and transportation expenses from OIG employees.

3. Use of this Authority

- a. The Agency will authorize payment of travel expenses for candidates invited for pre-employment interviews and new appointees' travel and transportation expenses subject to available funding. Payment will be managed by M/HR and funded from the Personnel Support account. For IG, payment will be managed by the Inspector General.

- b. Payment of candidates' pre-employment interview travel expenses and new appointees' travel and transportation expenses will be limited to individuals who reside outside the metropolitan Washington, D.C., commuting area.
- c. M/HR or IG will authorize payment of candidates' pre-employment interview travel expenses and new appointee's travel and relocation expenses to their first duty station, based on consideration of the factors in section Nos. 5b and 6b.
- d. A decision made in connection with one specific vacancy does not require a like decision in connection with future vacancies.

4. Applicability

- a. The Agency may authorize payment of candidates' pre-employment interview travel expenses or new appointees' travel and relocation expenses for Civil Service appointees and candidates, Administratively Determined (AD) appointees and candidates, Schedule C appointees and candidates, Senior Executive Service (SES) appointees and candidates and Executive Schedule (EX) appointees and candidates.
- b. Foreign Service (FS) or Senior Foreign Service (SFS) employees, employees on temporary and/or intermittent (when actually employed) appointments, U.S. and Foreign Service National direct hires and Personal Services Contractors are excluded from coverage under this regulation. Travel authorities for FS and SFS employees are covered in ADS 522-525.

5. Procedures for Paying Candidates' Pre-Employment Interview Travel Expenses

- a. Supervisors are normally the recommending officials that initiate requests for payment of pre-employment interview travel expenses. Supervisors must prepare a brief written request for payment that addresses the factors below. Upon completion, the supervisor forwards the written request through the responsible Administrative Management Staff (AMS) to the Chief, M/HR/POD or EM, or IG to approve.
- b. The Chief, M/HR/POD or EM, or IG will consider the following factors in approving requests for payment of candidates' pre-employment interview travel expenses
 - Funds availability;
 - Whether the position is critical to Agency needs;
 - Whether the Agency has experience or is experiencing difficulty in recruiting qualified individuals for such positions and whether payment of interview travel expenses would be needed to assist in recruiting efforts;
 - Whether sufficient information for determining the candidate's qualifications or adaptability for employment in a particular position can be obtained from information on their resume or application or by telephone conversations with the individual; and
 - There is a reasonable expectation of employing the candidate.

c. Upon approval of the request, the appropriate staff in M/HR (POD or EM) or IG will prepare a Request and Authorization of Official Travel, AID Form 5-8, in accordance with ADS 524, Entitlement for Domestic Relocation, and 41 CFR Chapters 301 and 302 of the Federal Travel Regulations.

d. M/HR or IG will not authorize advances of travel funds for pre-employment interview travel.

6. Procedures to Pay New Appointees' Travel and Transportation Expenses

a. Supervisors normally initiate requests for payment of a new appointee's travel and transportation expenses. Supervisors must prepare a brief written justification that addresses the factors below. Upon completion, the supervisor forwards the written request through the responsible AMS to the Chief, M/HR/POD or EM, or IG to approve.

b. The Chief, M/HR/POD or EM, or IG will consider the following factors in approving requests for payment of travel and transportation expenses for new appointees

- The availability of funds;
- Whether the position is critical to the employing Bureau or Office's needs;
- Whether the appointee's qualifications are of such high value to the employing Office or Bureau to warrant payment of the expenses;
- Whether the Agency has experience or is experiencing difficulty in recruiting qualified individuals for such positions and whether payment of travel and transportation expenses would be needed to assist recruitment efforts;
- The desirability of offering a recruitment incentive to a particular candidate; and
- Whether payment of travel and transportation expenses is being recommended solely or in combination with other incentives such as a recruitment bonus or an appointment above the minimum rate for a particular appointee.

c. When it is known in advance that candidates' pre-employment interview travel expenses and/or new appointees' travel and relocation expenses will be paid for the particular position, M/HR (POD or EM) or IG/M/PS must include a statement to this effect on the Merit Promotion vacancy announcement to facilitate recruitment efforts.

d. Upon approval of a request to pay a new appointee's travel and transportation expenses, M/HR (POD or EM) or IG/M/PS staff will prepare the travel authorization and provide the appointee with information concerning the allowable expenses. New appointees are eligible for payment of the following items in relocating to their first duty station (see Federal Travel Regulations, 41 CFR 302-1.10)

- Travel expenses including per diem for the appointee (see 41 CFR 302-2.1);

- Transportation for immediate family of appointee (see 41 CFR 302-2.2(a))
- Mileage if a privately owned vehicle is used in travel (see 41 CFR 302-2.3);
- Transportation and temporary storage of household goods (41 CFR 302-8);
- Nontemporary storage of household goods only if appointed to an isolated location (see 41 CFR 302-9.1); and
- Transportation of mobile home in lieu of household effects (41 CFR 302-7).

e. Authorization of allowable expenses and payment of travel and transportation expenses will be made in accordance with 41 CFR chapters 301 and 302 of the Federal Travel Regulations.

f. An advancement of funds for the allowable expenses listed above may be paid to a new appointee.

7. Written Service Agreement for New Appointees' Travel and Transportation Expenses

Payment for any of the allowable expenses or for an advance of funds may not be authorized unless the new appointee has signed a service agreement to remain in Government service for twelve months from the effective date of his or her appointment.

8. Repayment of Travel and Transportation Expenses

a. Except as provided in section 8b, an employee who fails to complete the twelve months of service required by the Payment of Travel and Transportation Expenses Service Agreement, Form AID 400-18, will be indebted to the Federal Government and required to repay the travel and relocation expenses on a pro rata basis. The amount to be repaid will be determined by providing credit for each full month of employment completed by the employee under the service agreement. In such cases, M/HR (POD or EM) or IG/M/PS will notify M/FM/P to initiate bill and collection actions. See ADS 625, Administrative Accounts Receivable, for additional information regarding employee indebtedness and Agency debt collection procedures.

b. Repayment of travel and transportation expenses is not required

- When the employee fails to complete the twelve months of service if the employee is involuntarily separated from the Agency for reasons beyond the employee's control which are acceptable to the Agency; or
- When the employee is granted a waiver by the Chief Financial Officer (M/CFO) that recovery of this debt, in whole or in part, would be against equity and good conscience or against the public interest. Requests to waive recovery of an employee's debt to the Agency must be submitted in accordance with waiver procedures found in ADS 625, Administrative Accounts Receivable.

- c. If an employee transfers from USAID to another Federal agency before the completion of twelve months' service, the remainder of the service obligation (in months) is transferred to the receiving agency.

9. Records and Evaluation

M/HR (POD or EM) or IG/M/PS will maintain records on use of these authorities. The records will include a copy of the travel authorization, written request for payment from the employing Bureau/Office and a copy of the signed Service Agreement for Payment of Travel and Transportation Expenses (if applicable). The original signed Service Agreement will be filed on the left side of the employee's Official Personnel Folder (OPF).

M/HR and IG staff will periodically evaluate the use of these authorities to ensure that payment conforms to the regulations and requirements set forth in these guidelines.

10. Authority and References

These guidelines meet the requirements in 5 U.S.C 5706b, 5 U.S.C. 5723 and 5 CFR part 572.

See also

- ADS 524, Entitlement for Domestic Relocation
- Federal Travel Regulations (41 CFR chapters 301 and 302)
- ADS 625, Administrative Accounts Receivable

The following agreement is required to comply with the policy and procedures in this Mandatory Reference

- Service Agreement for Payment of Travel and Transportation Expenses (AID Form 400-18)

11. Definitions

candidate or interviewee

An individual who has applied for (or is being considered for) a position in the Agency who

- Has never worked for the Federal Government;
- Has worked for the Federal Government in the past; or
- Is currently employed by the Federal Government in a Federal agency outside of the Washington, D.C., commuting area, regardless of the type of appointment.

commuting area

The geographic area that normally is considered one area for employment purposes. It includes any population center (or two or more neighboring ones) and the surrounding localities where people live and reasonably can be expected to travel back and forth daily to work. (Chapter 467)

new appointee

Includes employees on their first appointment to the Federal Government and also former Federal employees appointed after a break in service, except that employees separated as a result of reduction in force or transfer of function may be treated as transferees instead of new appointees (see Federal Travel Regulations, 41 CFR 302-1.9). (Chapter 467)

service agreement

A written agreement initiated by USAID and signed by a newly appointed employee under which the employee agrees to remain employed with the Federal Government for twelve months in return for payment of travel and transportation expenses. (Chapter 467)